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## **New IAHR Presidents message**

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# NEW IAHR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am very honoured and humbled by the outpouring of trust in me by IAHR colleagues – my sincere thanks to all those who have supported me. I would also like to congratulate the success of the other elected members of the Council. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the outgoing Executive Committee and Council led by Professor Peter Goodwin who have built an excellent foundation for the new Council to work from.

IAHR has always been a community of top scholars and researchers in different fields of water science and engineering, a truly international organization that produces high quality knowledge products that lead the industry; and it has a unique family spirit that ties young members to more experienced mentors. It is an excellent platform for hydraulics researchers. We are a prestigious organization with a proud history.

However, to stay successful as an organization we have to align ourselves with the needs of the users of water engineering needs of the users of water engineering research. We cannot afford to stand still and be complacent while the world changes. We have to race for relevance. We have to work more coherently as a team to capture global R&D and knowledge transfer opportunities and to contribute more visibly to solving the grand challenges of our times.

Water and environment rank high on the policy agenda of many governments in the coming decade. Population growth, urbanization and climate change give rise to many water, energy and food security issues – and many infrastructure needs. During the recent Panama Congress IAHR hosted a global forum on “Adaptive management in the face of climate change” – just three weeks ahead of the looming threats profusely propounded by many political leaders in the United Nations Climate Action Summit on September 23, 2019. The “Second Machine Age” (MIT press 2014) is also bringing many opportunities for the next generation of water environment research and practice: e.g. smart water management systems for climate resilient cities. Nature-based solutions to many environmental problems will offer a continuing stimulus to exciting developments at the interface of ecology, hydraulics and hydrology, and system science – besides job opportunities for young engineers and professionals.

In the past few months IAHR leadership has deliberated extensively on a new Strategic Plan which will be refined and announced at the beginning of the 2020. I will work with our new Executive Director, Tom Soo, and Executive Committee colleagues to implement the vision. Some of the messages in my election statement echo the Strategic Plan:

- (i) **Increase global presence** – enhance connection with major regions of the world that are under-represented – including Africa - and with other global forums. This requires the development of new international collaborative initiatives and business models to create and market the value of the collective synergy of our members. Mount dedicated efforts to work with institute members to create more impact.
- (ii) **Inspire, disseminate and catalyze state of the art knowledge** - IAHR can provide a platform for us to redefine the field and in so doing create stimulus to our thinking, foster innovations and create new water industries. We will actively engage IAHR scholars and practitioners in high level agenda setting inter-disciplinary forums and publications. An inter-disciplinary task force will be created to enhance oversight, efficient direction and impact of the high quality monographs and knowledge products produced by our technical committees. In an era where subjects like molecular neuroscience, Big data and robotics, and climate change command the attention of policy makers, we need to re-invent ourselves to utilize the powerful research of our Committees to address grand challenges like climate change and water sustainability. We can do this if we share this new vision, and look beyond our own narrow interests.
- (iii) **Promote diversity and enhance international collaboration.** In achieving the above goals, we will maintain our policy of actively promoting diversity and international collaboration. We welcome ideas and suggestions from young members and will build a sustainable strategy to increase IAHR membership.

## **New beginnings:**

With the support of our host institutes in Beijing and Madrid, I believe all the above is possible. IAHR is about “water connecting the world”. In this age where we see many conflicts due to globalisation and the “Clash of Civilisations” (as expounded by the Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington), IAHR can do a lot to help the world achieve sustainability through providing a connection and network, a flow of global expertise, and capacity building. Perhaps what I can offer most is to take the good ideas from colleagues and make them work.

I always remember this saying: “Ideas don’t work unless we do.” I look forward to working with all of you to move this great organization forward.

*Joseph Hun-wei Lee, IAHR President*